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agree with you that such a project as you propose, which is on a much larger scale than a merely municipal theatre, must depend for realization on private enterprise. The undertaking would be arduous, but, with good management, I believe it would eventually pay its way. My own proposal is essentially different, for I would not apply it to London, where we have already a number of trained companies. Municipal theatres are necessary, in my opinion, in our large provincial cities, which are now dependent entirely on traveling companies from the metropolis. Such a scheme as I suggest would revive the independent organization of the chief local theatre, provide a training for young actors, and, if properly directed, throw no burden on the rates. But you will see that, in the nature of things, this would be a much smaller affair than a national theatre.

(Signed)

HENRY IRVING.

VII.

SHELLEY'S MORALITY.

In a recently published essay, Mr. Charles Dudley Warner passes criticism on Shelley's moral code as shown in "Prometheus Unbound." But he reveals himself as wholly misconceiving it. He says: "In the poem Zeus stands for law, for faith, Christianity, custom, superstition, wrong, for every tyranny over the human mind; Prometheus for the universal love which dissolves all law and leaves man free."

Prometheus is the hero of the poem, the deliverer of mankind from oppression, the opposer of Zeus. At first under the thralldom of Zeus, he at last escapes and beholds the downfall of the tyrant. But is it true that Shelley represents Zeus as "law, faith, Christianity?" He certainly does let him stand for *false* "custom, superstition, and every tyranny." Shelley was a true scientist and believed in law. He believed in the highest moral law, that of love and justice. His definition of art, that it is true art only as connected with morality, shows how truly he revered the moral. His belief in justice is shown in his description of man when he shall have become renovated; then he is to be "gentle, *just*, and wise." As to "faith," it is Prometheus who represents that. He is the doomed victim of a tyrant, suffering every agony; yet he has faith in his deliverance, in the eternal downfall of evil, and the permanent establishment of the good.

Zeus did represent *perverted* Christianity. Shelley saw so much mock religion, so base a tyranny of the Church over her subjects, binding them to unreasoning and barbarous beliefs, that he was led to denounce Christianity as then existing. But any one who reads his poems aright will find them permeated through and through with the spirit of true Christianity. Of "Prometheus Unbound" can this especially be said; it is ever universal good-will and peace that he aspires for; the suppression of evil in all its forms that he desires.

Mr. Warner seems to have been misled by the use of words and thus failed to give the spirit of Shelley's belief due weight and justice. The dethronement of Zeus is the climax of the poem, but does it follow that Shelley denounces a God of love, purity, and justice? He says himself that, "under many a name and form has Jupiter, the Tyrant of the World, existed, abhorred of God." Thus he acknowledges that Highest Existence, and as very far apart from him whose doom he pronounces.

Mr. Warner seems led astray by the art-form in which Shelley has embodied a beautiful and truly religious conception of the world. "What basis," he asks, "has Shelley's conception in any conceivable system of ethics or philosophy?" What? we repeat, why that of the truest and strongest. Prometheus typifies the

nobler elements of humanity triumphing over the ignoble. As in the fable, Prometheus wars against Zeus, so here Zeus must represent all forms of the depraved, against which men must struggle, not by any means God, as our highest ideas embrace Him, nor any of the noble forms of life thus far developed in the world.

Certainly it was congenial to Shelley to let Zeus stand for evil, because of his belief that so many of the sufferings of men have sprung from their false notions of a God. His personal experience of religious intolerance and the anguish thereby inflicted intensified this belief. Who that shudders over the worst pages of Christian history will deny that he was right? But when we look deeper than the names and form of his work, and get an insight into the spirit of his teaching and aspiration, we find it in the highest sense religious. It is not "Anarchy" to which his thought leads, as Mr. Warner asserts, but true freedom,—man self-governed, and that self-government obtained by obedience to Divine Love.

Does any world-renowned religious teacher inculcate a better lesson than that of the closing lines of the great poem Mr. Warner finds lacking in the moral standard?—

" To suffer woes that hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy power that seems omnipotent ;
To love and bear ; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free ;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory."

A. M. GANNETT.